

Jagannatha Das

Sitakant Mahapatra



Makers of Indian Literature

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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi

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His Place in Oriya Literature and Culture

It is an irony of the social history of Orissa that we know so little about the life of the poet whose poetry, apart from enjoying immense popularity through the centuries, has been the dearest possession and the most powerful influence on its society, culture, belief-system and values. This is also true of many other seminal authors like Sarala Das, Balarama Das, Achyutananda Das and later Bhima Bhoi of whose lives we do not really know enough. In Orissa's culture and social milieu indifference to history seems to have been an inbuilt characteristic. Virtual anonymity of the master builders of Konarka, Rajarani and other temples was also a part of this tradition. What was important for these literary and plastic artists was their works and not their birth or parentage or life-story —a characteristic they shared with the powerful folk-tribal heritage of their own cultural system.

Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata* is not merely a poetical work. It is to the Oriyas perhaps more than what the Bible is to the Christian world. There is scarcely an Oriya village where at least one complete set of the *Bhagabata* is not worshipped or a home where it has not been known, listened to, read and recited. Even when society has been changing fast under the impact of modernising forces, the *Bhagabata Ghar* is still found in many villages or individual homes and *Bhagabata Parayana* or recitation is done every evening.

Writing in the later part of 19th century Bhudev Mukherjee, an Inspector of Schools, said that he found no words to adequately describe the contribution of Jagannatha Das to the life of the Oriyas. He felt there were no village in Orissa where Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata* was not preserved, read and admired. The *Bhagabata Ghar or Bhagabata Tungi* was a multipurpose institution in the village. It was a temple, a school, a club, a library and a place to settle disputes. It was indeed the nerve-centre of village life right upto the beginning of this century. Sankardev from Assam saw for himself the tremendous impact of the *Bhagabata Ghar* in the life of Orissa and started the institution of *Namaghara*. Institutions like *Bhagabata Sapta*, *Harihata* are integrally linked to its recitation by one or more people

lasting over a day or a week. In fact the latter institution in which a vast number take up the reading of different portions of the Oriya epic is one of the most moving cultural events in Orissa. Literally *Harihata* means the market of god. Yes, it is a market where in every shop you find only God's name recited. The Oriyas regulate their food-habits, social practices and religious activities by its teachings. Many lines from the *Bhagabata* have acquired the status of socio-religious sanction and have entered into the deeper psyche of the people. On every conceivable occasion an Oriya can recite some lines from the *Bhagabata*. Perhpas no other epic is quoted so profusely and so often.

In many houses the complete set of the epic is worshipped along with the domestic gods and goddesses and as the evening falls the young sons and daughters in the household wash their hands and feet and recite one chapter from it as other members of the family listen to it. It has indeed been the greatest single factor for stability and social cohesion by maintaining the continuity of a tradition. Even the unlettered and the most elderly people remember chapters and verses from it and seek consolation and solace in tragedies and justification for something or other from its soothing lines. When a person is dying the family members start reciting from it both to console themselves and to make the rite of passage for the dying person easy and smooth. Indeed it is treated as an instrument of spiritual sustenance and nourishment in life and death. For centuries it has served as the basic foundation of social and ethical values and regulated moral attitude. It captures, in extremely readable and lyrical lines, the eternal truth and values of Indian civilisation. Its appeal is thus timeless and ever new.

The *Bhagabata* is one of the three epics which have shaped the society and culture of the Oriya-speaking people and given them a distinct identity. The other two are the *Mahabharata* of Sarala Das and the *Jagamohan Ramayana* of Balarama Das. Indeed to them one may also add Achyutananda Das's *Harivamsa*. All the three authors followed the glorious example set by Sarala Das. They rewrote the concerned epics almost as original works taking substantial freedom in the process. They wrote in a language which was soaked in the local idiom and shared the flavour of the soil even while using a fair-mix Sanskrit vocabulary.

While the others are no less great as literary works, it is the Oriya *Bhagabata* which remains unsurpassed in the love and adoration which it has received from the Oriya people through the centuries. The Oriya *Ramayana* and the Oriya *Mahabharata* do not seem to have been inspired by any specific spiritual or ethical purpose too. In them the emphasis is on delineating the troubled times through a detailed narration of events and

the sharply-etched, idealised characters who demand our admiration and devotion. The *Bhagabata*'s appeal is on a somewhat different footing. Like other puranic literature, it has no doubt a large body of interesting and exciting stories and legends and tales. In fact the entire life of Krishna has been delineated in great details right from his birth up to his death and departure for Vaikuntha. But its major aim is not to tell a story, or paint a character but to expound a philosophy of life based on the Upanishadic traditions and to elaborate on how to achieve peace of the soul and deliverance here and now, and what are its modalities. What connects the stories and episodes is not the narrative element but an integral spiritual quest for a life-style based on selfless *bhakti* and non-attachment. The stories, wherever they occur, are merely aids to the unfolding of that high, ultimate spiturual purpose.

In translating the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* into Oriya, Jagannatha Das retained the basic thematic development of the original. He did not omit or modify very much. The writers of Oriya *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana,* on the other hand, did take somewhat greater freedom in composing the Oriya epics. They seem to have very carefully considered the need for modifications and deviations which would appeal to the Oriya mind. The vast repertoire of stories in the Oriya *Mahabharata* enriched Oriya language and literature which was in its infancy. It imparted a fecundity and resilience to the language and its capacity for higher articulation. The Gita as a part of the epic and its teachings hardly occupied any important place in its scheme of things. In Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata,* on the other hand, the emphasis is on the life of the spirit, the problems of ignorance or illusion and knowledge, the equations of pleasure and pain, of human destiny and grace, and the attainment of spiritual salvation. These make the Oriya *Bhagabata* an unsurpassed document in the quest for spirituality as an essential dimension of the Hindu view of life. At the same time, it is couched in a language which is both lyrical and metaphysical, aesthetically satisfying and emotionally invigorating.

Orissa had always been in the mainstream of the spiritual quest that characterised ancient Indian Life. The Oriya *Bhagabata* is the finest expression of this quest, and its tradition has regulated and influenced Orissa's culture, social ethics and value systems ever since.

In the entire range of Indian literature there are a very few works which have left such an all-pervading influence as this monumental work has on Oriya literature and society. The *Tulasi Ramayana* in North India, *Chaitanya Charitamruta* in Bengal and *Kamban Ramayana* in the South may be compared with it. The freshness of its language and the depth of perception of life have rarely been excelled. Dryden said that translation

of a major literary work needs to be re-done every 10 years. Eliot meant the same thing when he said that every generation has to translate a great epic afresh. A new translation is required because language keeps on changing and with that change the old version loses some of its charm and appeal. This does not seem to hold good in case of Jagannatha's Oriya translation of Sanskrit *Bhagabata*. On the other hand the reverse seems to be the case. Each time there has been a fresh translation of the great Sanskrit epic it has appeared pale before Jagannatha Das's version and has never stood comparison to it.

Summing up one may say that Oriya culture is indeed *Bhagabata* culture. Integrally linked to the spiritual quest of India it, however, retains its uniqueness. The spirit of liberal humanism, tolerance, sacrifice and humility, so characteristic of Oriya social life, are indeed the gifts of this epic.

What was the literary, philosophical and religious landscape before him, by the end of the 15th century, when Jagannatha Das came to write? Since the days of the *Charyāpadas* and the *Sāndhyā bhāsā* Oriya literature has travelled a long way. Particularly Sarala Das's Oriya *Mahabharata* enriched the language with an immense colloquial strength, and added glory to it. In fact it could be looked upon as the first major revolution in language and a real literature of protest. The exotic *dombis* and *sabaris* with their camouflaged philosophic - religious symbolism had given place to real men and women, kings, courtiers and ordinary men who lived, loved, fought and died.

Simultaneously Puri had become the central place for religious transactions and gatherings where every great saint came and talked of his beliefs and debated it with others. Jagannatha, the Lord of the Universe, was in the process of becoming the eclectic god that he became: Buddha, Krishna, Rama et al rolled into one. Shankardeva, Jnanadeva, Ekanath, Tukaram, Namadeva, Purandara Das, Kanaka Das—all over India it was the time of the saints who understood the common man's anguish and wanted religion and philosophy to share it. To speak of a common destiny of man they looked for a simple linguistic apparatus as they did not find Sanskrit adequate for the purpose. With Kabir they could perhaps assert that while Sanskrit was the water of a deep well, the regional languages represented the moving waters of the rivers. They believed in a new social order without the traditional barrier of caste. The arid debate concerning religion was anathema to them and they wanted to speak about faith and right living, God and His compassion, man and his aspirations in simple, unadorned and current language. In Orissa a new liberalism had swept across the land. After territorial expansion there had been a tremendous

spurt in temple-building, and architecture and sculpture flourished. Philosophers, ascetics and men of great learning had flocked to Puri which had become indeed the seat of a great religious tradition.

Speaking of the religious literature of this period (Panchasakhas and others) nearly eight decades back, Sri Manmohan Chakravarty observed: "They showed that the Oriya language could be made fit for expressing complex thoughts and abstract feelings. They prepared in fact the way for the later Oriya poets Dinakrushna Das, Upendra Bhanja and Abhimanyu Samantasinhar".

Jagannatha Das was a product of this new climate in India and Orissa, and certainly the finest flower of this new awakening. He and the Panchasakhas built on and consolidated the solid literary- linguistic foundations laid by Sarala Das. In him literature, philosophy and religion became close allies and worked together, hand in hand, to reach the common man in a manner which is really unique in the history of this land.

His Life — Its Hazy Outlines

In Jagannatha Das's own works one finds virtually nothing about his life except his name. Nor does he write much about his times, his contemporaries or contemporaneous society. It is thus a pity that we really do not know enough about the author— even though his is a household name in Orissa — to meaningfully correlate his life to his works. One has to rely on other contemporaneous literary works and literary works in the period immediately following him and piece together disparate information relating to his life. The relatively more important among such works are the following :

1. *Jagannatha Charitamruta* : This is authored by one Dibakara Das and is believed to have been written in the second or third quarter of the 17th century as it refers to certain materials found in the Bengali work, *Chaitanya Charitamruta*, the writing of which is generally held to have been completed by 1615 A.D. So far literary historians and scholars have depended very much on this particular work for details of Jagannatha Das's life. Some recent critical opinions have expressed doubt, based on internal literary evidences, whether the Jagannatha Das of this book is indeed the celebrated author of the Oriya *Bhagabata*.

2. *Panchasakha Literature* : In the Oriya literature and socio-cultural history of the 15th and 16th centuries the Panchasakhas (literally, five friends) — Balarama Das, Jagannatha Das, Sishu Ananta Das, Jasobanta Das and Achyutananda Das — occupy a prominent position. It is more appropriate to see them as belonging, even if somewhat amorphously, to a system of religious belief and they are associated that way in the popular imagination. They neither belonged to nor created a school of literature nor did they promote any particular theme or group of themes or style. However, in the works of Sishu Ananta, Jasobanta and Achyutananda and more particularly in the latter's *Sunya Samhita*, *Guru Bhakti Gita*, *Garuda Gita* and *Dasapatala* one finds some references to Jagannath Das.

3. *Chaitanya Bhagabata* of Iswara Das is mainly devoted to Chaitanya's life and was composed nearly 150 years after his death. In it there are references to the life and times of Jagannatha Das. Some of these differ in essentials from those found in Dibakara Das's biographical work. There are several imaginative episodes and incidents which dilute its authenticity as a historical and biographical piece.

4. Gopala Khandaka's *Padmakalpa Purana* and Nanda Das's *Anakara Samhita* follow substantially the pattern of Dibakara Das's work. However they have some relevance as they provide some source-material for the life of the author of Oriya *Bhagabata.* Gopala Khandaka was reputedly one of the major disciples of Jagannatha Das.

5. There are two other literary works, *Dardhyatabhakti Rasamruta* by Rama Das and *Chakada Basana* by Mangala Sravan Chaini. Both these works are basically religious texts and describe how unflinching devotion to God can save one from great perils and tribulations. Scattered here and there, however, one comes across stray references to Jagannatha's life.

These works broadly throw some light on his relationship with the Panchasakhas and with king Prataprudradeva, his status and role in the royal court, and his relationship with Sri Chaitanya. They are not, of course, free from occasional doubts and contradictions. They also contain various other fragments of information concerning his life. The following general account emerges if we piece together these information.

Jagannatha Das was born in a village named Kapileswarapur about six miles from the present Puri town. His father was one Bhagaban Das and mother, Padmavati. Bhagaban Das was a Brahmin, and a socially respected scholar in Sanskrit and used to recite and explain the Sanskrit *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the eighteen puranas for the benefit of the public of the village and its neighbourhood. Purushottoma Deva had conferred on him the title of "Purana Panda" for this.

The precise year of his birth according to the Christian era is somewhat uncertain. Dibakara Das, the author of *Jagannatha Charitamruta*, only mentions that he was born in the month of Bhadraba, in the bright fortnight of the moon and under Anuradha *nakshatra* around noon on a Wednesday. He also mentions that Jagannatha was eighteen at the time of Chaitanya's first visit to Srikshetra for which now the generally accepted date is 1509 A.D. Hence Jagannatha must have been born in 1490 or 1491 A.D. The eminent historian of Oriya literature, Pandit Suryanarayan Das, however, puts it in the year 1487 basing his arguments on materials relating to the birth of the Panchasakhas as enshrined in Achyutananda's *Udaya Kahani*. Thus Jagannatha was born sometime between 1487 and 1491 A.D. It is reasonably certain that he was a very bright child and had acquired high proficiency in the readings of the Vedas, Sanskrit *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Nyaya and Vedant texts etc. Nothing is, however, known about the school where he read or his teachers. But it looks likely that he began with the Sanskrit *tol* in the neighbourhood and later had no other formal schooling and mostly read by himself. He resisted all attempts of his parents to have his early marriage, a practice which must have been

common those days and instead devoted himself to intellectual and spiritual pursuits. That he was well versed in Sanskrit classics can easily be seen from his own Sanskrit compositions. The influence of Sarala's Oriya *Mahabharata* is easily discernible in his own work *Darubrahma Gita*. Another composition *Artha Koili* is in fact only a spiritual version of Markanda Das's *Kesaba Koili*. Thus in addition to Sanskrit learning he was also conversant with the Oriya *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and other important classics of the period.

Srimat Jiva Goswami and Sri Devaki Nandan, author of *Vaisnava Vandana* have complimented him on his proficiency as a musician. The nine-lettered lines of the *Bhagabata* as well as its inherent musical quality bear testimony to his musical genius. It appears that at the age of nineteen he gave up home and his village and migrated to Srikshetra (Puri). It is not, however, clear whether he had been initiated into Vaishnavism prior to his coming there or he did so by accepting initiation at the hands of Balarama Das as per the direction of Sri Chaitanya.

Recitation of Sanskrit *Bhagabata* was a daily ritual in the Jagannatha temple since the time of Kapilendra Deva and in fact Narottama Das, a brahmin of Kapileswara Sasana, which Kapilendra had established, was the first pundit who was put on this job. It is said that this came down as inheritance in the fourth generation to Jagannatha's father, Bhagaban Das. Needless to say all these recitations were in Sanskrit which was the accepted language of religious and scholarly discourses. When Jagannatha took up this task he, however, broke the tradition and started explaining the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* to the assembled audience in Oriya translation. There are various legends as to why Jagannatha deviated from such a time-honoured practice. The one generally believed in refers to his desire to make the original accessible to his illiterate but deeply religious mother who wanted to listen to and understand it in the declining years of her life. The legend seems to be only a personal instance of the emotive desire of millions of illiterate people not knowing Sanskrit to read or listen to the themes of the *Bhagabata* in the local language.

If one would believe Dibakara Das, the author of *Jagannatha Charitamruta*, Jagannatha had started this task around the age of eighteen and when Chaitanya came to Puri in 1510 A.D. this was already in practice. There is a reference in the above work to Sri Chaitanya witnessing Jagannatha's recitation and elucidations in lyrical Oriya of certain particular *slokas* from the 10th volume of the *Bhagabata*. Some scholars have expressed doubt whether the Oriya rendering of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata*, rich in its spiritual quest, its poetic gifts and the maturity of composition could at all be done by one at the comparatively young age

of twenty to twenty-four. They feel it should be more properly looked upon as the later and mature work of a genius. However, it would be inappropriate to ignore the specific mention of a fact by a contemporaneous biographer. The same biographer Dibakara Das also refers to Jagannatha's growing interest in spiritual *sadhana*, his readings in philosophical texts and the time spent with Sri Chaitanya. The Oriya *Bhagabata* is remarkable not merely for enshrining high spiritual or philosophical values or questionings; it is also unexcelled for the sheer energy of its lyricism and its deep emotive patterns that stir the human heart like all great poetic creations. The dark energy that moves the words is often more associated with youth and its dreams rather than with intellectual profundity or cognitive skill. There are numerous instances when great poetic creations have come at comparatively young age. And this applies in equal measure not only to the literary arts but also to other art-creations. There are film-makers whose first films have remained as their most creative, most outstanding and most loved. Same can be said of fiction writers, composers and painters. Hence the possibility of the Oriya *Bhagabata* having been composed by Jagannatha Das at a comparatively young age is not to be lightly dismissed. Youth is no bar to a high level of artistic creativity.

In the history of Vaishnavism in Orissa there are two major events which had a bearing on its subsequent development. One was Chaitanya's arguments and debate with the famous *niyayika* of Puri, Pandit Sarbabhauma, and the latter's admission of defeat in the debate leading to his acceptance of Vaishnavism. The second event is the meeting of Jagannatha and Chaitanya. This has been described perhaps with a measure of natural exaggeration, as to how much Chaitanya was moved when he came upon Jagannatha's brilliant lyrical exposition of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* in Oriya and that in his mellifluous voice. Chaitanya had met the other four writers of the Panchasakha group by that time. Sworn of exaggerations the basic fact remains that he and Jagannatha both shared the same view of life and religion and had great regard for each other. It is certain that Chaitanya not merely held Jagannatha in high esteem, but also expressed his respect and personal regards for Jagannatha in presence of his other followers, not all of whom took it gracefully and some indeed were positively envious and hostile. Theirs was a complex relationship sanctified by mutual appreciation and regard for each other's deep religious life and philosophy. When the Gaudiya Vaishnavas took exception to the fact of Jagannatha not being technically a Vaishnava, the latter wanted to be initiated into it, even though Chaitanya had argued with his followers that a person like Jagannatha was in spirit a true Vaishnava whether technically he had embraced it or not. It appears ultimately

Jagannatha was initiated into Utkaliya school of Vaishnavism, as distinct from the Gaudiya school, by Balarama Das, a fact which is mentioned in many contemporaneous records.

Chaitanya was fully aware of the variations in ritual observations, litanies and other technical details between the two schools of Vaishnavism. But his high regard for the profound scholarship, the poetic genius and the unassuming, selfless personality of Jagannatha led him to confer the title of *Atibadi* (the very great) on him by addressing him as such. This led to further accentuation of 'envy' among a section of Chaitanya's followers who even tried to persuade him to leave Puri for Dwaraka and Brindavan and thus be kept physically away from his attachment to Jagannatha. Chaitanya was so much in love with Srikshetra that he did not do any such thing. There was perhaps nothing personal in such 'envy'. Perhaps it was the product of narrow sectarian concerns and Chaitanya was too great a man to be bound by such superficial differences in the teachings and tenets of his own *Raganuga bhakti* path and the path of Utkaliya Vaishnavism in which Jagannatha was a great believer and which emphasised a harmonious and balanced relationship among *gyana, bhakti* and *yoga*. Such situations are not rare in the history of religions and religious sects. Apart from other factors Chaitanya's great admiration for Jagannatha arose out of his very high opinion of the latter's rendering of the *Bhagabata* in Oriya which closely followed the general interpretations of the classic as enshrined in the *Bhabartha Dipika* of Sridharswamy, a follower of the great philosopher Shankaracharya. This authoritative annotation was held in high esteem by Chaitanya himself.

Legend has it that once during his routine visit to the Jagannatha temple, king Prataprudra Deva met Chaitanya there, and requested him to explain the philosophy of the inherence of Radha and Krishna in the image of Lord Jagannatha. At Chaitanya's behest it was Jagannatha Das who did the philosophical explaining to the great satisfaction of the king. Thus began his relationship with the king who ordained that Jagannatha may leave Kapileswarpur, his native village, and reside in a portion of the palace built for the queen just behind the main temple. Eventually, however, he settled down to live in a small cottage on the seashore which is now known as the Satalahadi (seven waves) Math. It is said that the king's eldest queen, Gouri Devi, was also initiated into Vaishnavism by Jagannatha.

Jagannatha's immense popularity among the masses who flocked to listen to his Oriya rendering of the Original Sanskrit *Bhagabata* recited in his own sweet voice finds mention in several contemporaneous literature. In fact this was an event of great significance in the history and development of Oriya literature. The Prakrit languages got a great thrust and

dynamism from such renderings of a major work of Sanskrit. With this came a mass upsurge for regional literature, along with Jagannatha's growing eminence as a scholar and thinker. There were naturally some envious people who tried to run down his achievements and even paint him as a man of low morals. He had created enemies among the *purana pandas* by his recitations as they had lost the *dakshina* which they used to receive from the devotee-listeners. As for himself, even though hundreds gathered at his recitations of the Oriya translation, he never even asked for a paisa ! There were others too who considered his prakrit rendering of the *Bhagabata*, a great source material of classical Sanskrit learning, as an assault on that tradition and an affornt to scholarship. Needless to mention Sanskrit Pundits had a rather poor opinion of regional literatures and languages. Sarala Das and Balarama Das, the authors of Oriya *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, or for that matter Tulasidas in Hindi had encountered such wrath from the classicists. Jagannatha Das, however, became the focal point of envy, resentment and anger due to the added reason of the envy of the followers of Chaitanya. There are legends which describe how even king Prataprudra Deva was misled into believing in some of these rumours circulated by envious enemies concerning his morals. But it did not last long. *Jagannatha Charitamruta* of Dibakara Das and *Dardhyata Bhaktirasamruta* of Rama Das give varying versions of these legends. Some of these also attribute extra-sensory and almost supernatural, spiritual powers to Jagannatha. One of them is worth mentioning. As per this, once an affluent merchant from Kasi presented a piece of very valuable sandal wood to king Prataprudra Deva who in turn handed it over to Jagannatha to prepare paste and anoint Lord Jagannatha. Jagannatha made the paste but applied it to the walls of his own Math. When news of this reached the King he was naturally furious and wanted an explanation for this preposterous behaviour. Jagannatha's cool reply was that he had applied sandal paste on the Lord with perfect devotion. At this the King wanted the *sevaka* to verify and report to him. And to their utter dismay and surprise they found that the Lord had actually been anointed with this special aromatic sandal paste. At this the King realised his own mistake and the greatness of Sri Das and he promptly apologised to him.

Jagannatha Das never travelled to various places of pilgrimage in India like other religious personalities and saints. He considered it adequate to stay at Srikshetra all his life. And instead of putting over-riding emphasis on knowledge or ritual-observations he put a high premium on right living, right action, simplicity of life-style and on devotion or *bhakti*. *Sadhana* remained important but not merely as a system of formulae, incantations,

or celebrations. It was transmuted into quieter channels of submission to the divine and the path of right-living.

Apart from Chaitanya, Jagannatha had intimacy with Balarama, Achyuta, Jasobanta and Shishu Ananta, all of whom contributed to the growth of Oriya literature, religion and philosophy. While there may be more than one opinion as to whether the Panchasakha could be termed as a literary group or movement, there is no doubt that the works of the five taken together remain as significant landmarks in the history of Oriya literature and culture. As such it is of little relevance whether in the history of Oriya literature it should be termed as a movement. Taken together the five had distinctive contribution to the making and evolution of Oriya Vaishnavism and Oriya literary tradition. They had their disciples and followers. Shishu Ananta mentions that Jagannatha had around 3600 *shishyas* of whom 12 were quite prominent. Quite a few of these also became important figures in Oriya literature in their own rights. It seems Jagannatha breathed his last in the sixtieth year of life. Legend, as quoted by biographer Dibakara Das, has it that he had a premonition of his end and mentioned it during one of his usual religious-literary discourses, and then passed away. The day is said to be the 7th day in the bright fortnight of the month of Magha in 1550 A.D. Thus ended a life of dedication that had ushered in significant religious, literary and linguistic transformations in Orissa.

The Oriya Bhagabata

Among all the writings of Jagannatha Das the *Bhagabata* enjoys without doubt the most important position. In fact if this was the only work which the poet had composed in his entire poetic career this would have ensured immortality for him. And that despite the fact that technically this is supposed to be only the Oriya version of the celebrated Sanskrit classic. For the Oriya *Bhagabata* is not merely a literary classic. In its successful incorporation of the basic philosophical ideas found in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Sankhya and the Gita etc., it remains unsurpassed also as an original spiritual classic couched at the same time in the most lyrical, the most symbolic and evocative language.

The Sanskrit *Bhagabata* is one of the eighteen Puranas celebrated in Hindu philosophy, religion and literary history. There is, however, no doubt that it enjoys a pre-eminent position among the Puranas and has generally been held as a classic of all times and a Mahapurana. The *Padmapurana* refers to it as the quintessence of all the Puranas, the Vedas, the Vedantas, Samhitas and Tantras.

The precise date of composition of this great classic is far from certain. However now there seems to be general agreement that it was composed a little before the sixth century A. D. The great philosopher Shankara lived in the 7th century. In his *Prabodha Sudhakara* one can notice some influence of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata*. While expounding the concept of *Panchikarana* Shankara's Guru Gaudapada quotes the first *sloka* of the 3rd chapter in the first volume of the *Bhagabata*. The Alwars of south India and the Acharyas following them had given a new thrust to Sanskrit learning and had also sought to bring about a synthesis of puranic religious learning. Unfortunately, however, the exact historical period of the Alwars and their composition is also far from certain. In his work *Lord of the Autumn Moons* Sri R. K. Mukherjee advances the hypothesis that the making of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* was perhaps during the period of cultural efflorescence and Sanskrit learning in India. Similarly Sri H. C. Raichoudhury in his work *Materials for the Study of Vaishnavism* also makes the point that the Alwars give enough impression in their works of an intimate acquaintance with and assimilation of the *Bhagabata* and hence its composition is certainly around the sixth century. It is thus not

unreasonable to believe that the Alwars and their work and the composition of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* was a little prior to the time of the great Indian sage and philosopher of Advaita Vedanta, namely Shankara.

Krishna Dwaipayan Vyasadeva is the composer of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* and he is supposed to have taken it up only after the entire *Mahabharata* had been composed. In fact the first volume of the *Bhagabata* refers to the emotional compulsion that led Vyasadeva to its composition. It is said that the author of the monumental work somehow did not feel a sense of fulfilment and creative satisfaction and once he confided this to the sage Narada. The latter mentioned that this was probably due to the reason that while he had delved deep into the realm of knowledge and philosophy, nowhere he had said anything specifically for the underprivileged, the women, the Sudras and the other neglected sections of the community nor had he composed anything in particular in praise of Lord Krishna. Vyasadeva took the hint and started composing this great classic and narrating it to his son Suka who in turn passed it on to king Parikshita as he awaited inevitable death due to a curse. The entire episode explain ing the origin and motivation of the classic may be imaginative rather than historical but it does fit into the relative importance of the two great works in the popular imagination.

Over the ages there have been various commentaries on the Sanskrit *Bhagabata*. At least ten of them are considered significant. The most well-known and accepted is the *Bhavartha Dipika* of Sridharaswamy which Jagannatha used while translating the classic into Oriya. This annotation had found general acceptance almost throughout the whole of India by the beginning of 15th century. In 12th and 13th centuries we hear of the four important philosophers of Vedanta — Ramanuja, Madhvacharya, Vishnuswamy and Nimbarka. Legend has it that Vishnuswamy who was a believer in pure advaita philosophy had established a *math* in Puri. Even today a Siva *linga* in a temple near Delang, in Puri district, is referred to as Vishnuswamy *linga*, apparently as a tribute to its establishment by this philosopher. Sridharaswamy was a follower of Vishnuswamy.

This great epic has been translated into every Indian language. Among the more significant ones one may mention Potana's translation in Telugu, Shankara Deva's in Assamese, Ekanath's in Marathi, and Sanatan Goswamis in Bengali. It is reasonably certain that Jagannatha Das's translation of the great classic into Oriya was one of the earliest translations in a regional language. The Bengali translation of Sanatan Goswami is believed to be in the 17th century and the translation of the 10th *Skandha* by Suradas and incorporated in his *Surasagar* is also around the middle of 16th century. This great classic has thus been available to the Indian

reading public through the translations in regional languages and enjoys a pre-eminently popular position almost all over India.

It is reasonably certain that Jagannatha completed the Oriya *Bhagabata* in eleven volumes or *skandhas* and that the 12th and the 13th are later additions by less gifted poets. This is based on scholarly analysis and comparison of the internal linguistic structures of these two volumes with the first eleven volumes. Even to the layman the poetic skill, language-use and appeal of the first eleven volumes are nowhere to be seen in the 12th and 13th volumes.

From the arrangement of the theme in the *Bhagabata*, the eleventh volume appears to be the last volume as it describes the departure of Krishna from this earth for his heavenly abode after completing his *leela*. This seems such a natural and moving end to the theme. The subsidiary themes taken up in the 12th volume, like king Parikshita's ascent to heaven, the coming of the Kaliyuga and so on are not really integral to the main theme and can at most be looked upon as footnotes or later additions. Added to that is of course the discrepancy in language and style between the first eleven volumes and the later two.

As mentioned earlier it is also reasonably certain that the *Bhagabata* was composed very early and certainly by the 25th year in the poet's life, and his later years saw a growing preoccupation with matters religious and spiritual, and even organizational. That would perhaps explain the composition of other less significant works which lacked the range, the passionate intensity and the sheer depth of the *Bhagabata* and were, at the most, its pale reflections. Quite often this phenomenon has been noticed in literary and cultural history that the very first or the early work of an artist has stood out as his most moving, the most important and even the most mature. It could be the sheer energy, the *duende* or dark power of which Lorca speaks which moves the words and through that moves us.

In his sequencing of the *Bhagabata* Jagannatha Das generally followed the scheme of chapterisation of the original text as accepted by Sridhara-swamy.

Jagannatha Das's eleven volumes or *skandhas* in Oriya contain 329 chapters whereas the original Sanskrit *Bhagabata* contains 322 chapters. The additional seven chapters are in the 10th and the 11th volumes, six in the former and one in the latter.

The following table lists the chapters in the 2 versions.

Volumes	Original Sanskrit (in Sridhara's Version) Chapters	Jagannatha Das's Oriya Version Chapters
First	19	19
Second	10	10
Third	33	33
Fourth	31	31
Fifth	26	26
Sixth	19	19
Seventh	15	15
Eighth	24	24
Ninth	24	24
Tenth (Gopalila & Dwarakalila together)	90	96
Eleventh	31	32
	322	329

In the 10th volume, which itself has two parts, six chapters in the original text have been broken up into two chapters each, thereby increasing the total number of chapters from 90 to 96. The chapters which have been so bifurcated are : first, thirty-fourth, thirty-sixth, forty-eighth, fifty-eighth and seventy-eighth. This seems to have been done with a view to slightly expand and explain certain contexts which the translator perhaps felt would otherwise remain somewhat obscure for the Oriya readers. Similarly the second chapter in the original eleventh volume has been broken up into two chapters in the Oriya version.

It is not merely the increase in the number of chapters. The total number of *pathas* (2 lines each of nine letters) in the Sanskrit original is eighteen thousand while its Oriya counterpart has as many as 27158 *pathas*.

There are several reasons for this. Perhaps the foremost reason is the telescopic, cryptic idiom of the Sanskrit original which, if it is to be properly and adequately rendered in all its essentials in a regional language, demands certain expansion and elucidations here and there. Joining of words, omission of verbs etc. are quite common in Sanskrit. This is not as simple in regional languages nor always possible without appearing rather profound, obscure and even unreadable. A second reason, perhaps equally important in this context, is that Jagannatha Das must have been acutely aware that he was recreating the great Sanskrit classic for the spiritual elightenment and literary appreciation of his Oriya readers who did not have access to the original and the entire purpose would be defeated unless he rendered it in easily intelligible and clear manner. Lucidity and clarity are indeed the hallmarks of this great work.

The translator has also sometimes felt it necessary to give the theme

more of a local context, social credibility and pictorial quality. At other times he seems to have been driven by his religious fervour to emphasise and expand those portions dealing with the *leela* or activities of Lord Krishna. It should however be remembered that these expansions or dilations of the theme rarely detract from the poetic quality of the original or make them little more than verbose transcreations of it. In fact the most important merit of the Oriya work is its essential originality of language and idiom, of mellowed philosophical attitude to life fused with passion and intensity of poetic fervour. It is indeed a unique poetic creation. Basically a translation, it looks and reads more like an original than perhaps any work of similar dimension. A poetical work with a philosophical backdrop, it never degenerates into arid, obscure or abstruse philosophical debates and discussions. On the other hand the most difficult philosophical propositions are delineated through simple stories (as for example, the "twenty-four Gurus" episode which brings out, through various examples, the essence of detachment in life) narrated in the traditional manner of story-telling. A work which certainly had at least a partial motivation of religious or spiritual purpose never degenerates into any listing of litanies or observances of rituals or ceremonies. This explains why the Oriya *Bhagabata* remains the most intimate expression of the Oriya soul as well as the culture and social ethics of the Oriya-speaking people.

There are certain difficulties in arriving at a hundred percent original text of the *Bhagabata* as composed by Jagannatha Das. There are more than one set of palm-leaf manuscripts available and more than one edition of this epic. When copies were made out of the original by comparatively inexperienced persons or minor poets, errors have crept in here and there and there have been some distortions. Late Rajkishore Das took the trouble of looking at the available manuscripts and printed texts side by side with the original Sanskrit work and finalised and published what is now generally regarded as an authoritative version of Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata*. Late Chintamoni Acharya also brought out a correct (*suddha*) edition but in essential it followed Rajkishore Das's edition. While acknowledging the sincerity of Rajkishore's endeavour, it must be said that the methodology he adopted for the editing work was not strictly logical. Wherever there were variations in the printed texts and palm-leaf texts he generally fell back on the Sanskrit version, knowing pretty well that Jagannatha Das did divert, expand, and modify the original text in his monumental translation. It would have been allright if the Oriya *Bhagabata* had been a very faithful translation of the original Sanskrit work, which it was not, as pointed out earlier. Hence there have been certain

serious limitations in adjudging as Rajkishore did the correctness of the manuscripts by seeking complete correspondence with the original Sanskrit text. But this notwithstanding Rajkishore Das's edition, arrived at by a life-time's dedicated scholarship and endeavour, is till now the most authoritative edition of Jagannatha's work. The version is totally free from peripheral errors, such as, a) incorrectness of *varnas* or particular letters bearing the sonant quality, b) wrong *sandhis* or joining of words, c) syntactical errors, d) errors of punctuation, e) errors of transfer of letters or *varnas* and f) grammatical errors which are found in ample measure in various printed texts as well as in the palm-leaf manuscripts.

In his Oriya *Bhagabata* apart from the increased number of chapters and materials added by way of explication, elaboration and localization, Jagannatha Das also changed and deviated from the original text in several ways. For example he added, at the beginning of each *skandha* or volume, a not-too-elaborate but fairly indicative *mangalacharana* or invocatory preface, wherein the major themes to be described in the volume were broadly suggested. Then again at the end of each chapter he added a concluding line or two by way of *Kabi bhanati* or statement by the poet. While Ganesa, Saraswati, Sri Krishna, Madhava, Ramchandra and Nrusimha are invoked in the original text as per Sridhara's *Tika*, Jagannatha Das confined his invocatory preface only to Narasimha, the *adi devata* of Srikshetra or Purushottama kshetra, that is Puri. As a matter of fact the *Skandha Purana* describes how God had manifested Himself to king Indradyumna in the form of man-lion or Narasimha and how the latter was no other than Lord Jagannatha who came to be worshipped in 'Srimandira', also termed as Nilasaila or Blue-mountain. This would therefore mean that Jagannatha Das — whose name itself literally means the servant (Das) of Jagannátha — invoked his own deity before whom he was rendering the translations and reading out for the lay public the Oriya version of the great Sanskrit work.

Jagannatha Das's capacity for moving poetic expression can be seen from an example. In the original Sanskrit *sloka* (39th *sloka* of Vol. I, Chapter 39) Kunti addresses Krishna to say that when he goes away to Dwaraka "this land bereft of the touch of your feet marked with *dhwaja* and *ankusha* will no longer look beautiful". In the Oriya rendering Jagannatha Das puts the same idea into four moving lines :

At the magic touch of your feet
This land looks as a woman blessed ;
And when you depart
It will look a desolate widow.

If concrete imagery is the soul of moving poetry then there is no doubt that Jagannatha has made the sequence really memorable. Often he expanded the original theme by way of providing more details which made the narration more evocative, touched with local colour and cultural milieu. When Krishna lifts up the mountain Govardhana and balances it at the tip of his finger, Jagannatha adds on to it the desperate efforts of the cowherd families of Gopa to supplement it even while afraid that any moment the mountain may come crashing down. How after all a child can hold the mountain that way, and how long! The narration looks so authentic and so natural; the panic, the disbelief, the mixture of awe and respect, all come out together beautifully through memorable lines.

A similar expansion of the scope of a story that adds to poetic effect can be seen in respect of the 5th *sloka* (of the original Sanskrit version) in chapter 4 volume I. Here the daughters of heaven, while taking their bath, heard of the coming of the naked young sage Suka, a *brahmachari* from his birth. They rushed forward to have a look at this extraordinary sage but while doing so, when they sighted old Vyasadeva, they hastily re-entered the waters ashamed of their revealing wet clothes. This surprised Vyasadeva and to his query (this is where Jagannatha adds) the girls explained how it was not merely a question of age. While they felt no embarassment before the young and naked Suka, they did feel it before his old father, and it was because he was still a man immersed in this world, whereas his son stood above and beyond it. Here again the dialogue is in exquisite poetic lines and the confession of the *devanganas* as they pay obeisance to Vyasadeva is beautifully dramatic, psychologically moving and appropriate.

Quite often Jagannatha Das brings his knowledge of parallel themes in the Oriya *Sarala Mahabharata*, *Padmapurana* and *Jagamohana Ramayana* to bear on treatment of certain themes in his own work. The killing of the five sons of Draupadi by Aswathama, and Duryodhana inciting Aswathama to this deed, is a case in point. This is from the Oriya *Mahabharata* and not from the Sanskrit original.

The elaborate dialogue between the demon-king Hiranyakashipu and his son Prahlad which we find in Oriya *Bhagabata* does not also occur in the original Sanskrit version. Here in the Oriya version the rising anger of the demon-king is brought to a boiling point almost through a slow motion picture as Prahlad finally looks at the pillar fearfully and submits that the Lord is also in it. And there he sees the Lord resplendent in his divine glory with the lotus, conchshell, mace and the *chakra*.

Akrura's journey to Gopa at king Kamsa's behest to fetch Krishna and Balarama for the festival is yet another such instance of deviation from the

original, the additional material being evocatively poetic. As Akrura arrives in Gopa and is himself eager to have a view of Krishna and Balarama he is directed to the cattle-shed where the two brothers, along with other cowherd boys, are milking the cows. To test Akrura's patience an illusion is created by the Lord. All the boys look like Krishna with ear-rings, garlands of forest flowers around their necks, and peacock feathers tucked in the headgear. The confused and anguished Akrura prays in his mind for the Lord's sight and then the *maya* is lifted and he has his view of the two brothers. For this version perhaps Jagannatha Das depended on a similar episode in the *Vishnu Purana*.

One other important variation from the original deserves mention. It is in the description of the *Rangasabha* at Mathura to which Kamsa had invited Krishna and Balarama. Here the kings assembled have been named; Krishna and Balarama are formally brought over to the *Sabha* and the citizens of Mathura, who have obviously heard so much about the grace and strength of the nephews of the king, cheer them wildly as they arrive, and Kamsa slowly opens his design as to how everybody present would witness the boys' death. The entire episode is again delineated in lines which are realistic, touching and highly evocative. This completes the presentation of Kamsa as the ultimate villain who has now richly earned his own destruction by unrelenting, limitless and futile enmity towards Krishna.

The episode of the curse of the sages on the fun-loving Yadu youngsters, who had dressed up Shamba as a pregnant woman and wanted the rishis to pronounce the sex of the child, is also somewhat extended and elaborated in the Oriya version and for this Jagannatha seems to be indebted to Sarala's *Mahabharata*, rather than the Sanskrit *Bhagabata*. The rishis whose anger was as great as their virtue cursed that the metal cauldron which was kept hidden on Shamba would be the cause of the destruction of the clan of the Yadus.

From several episodes in the Oriya *Bhagabata* one can get vivid and realistic pictures of contemporaneous Oriya society, its value-systems, organisational structure, its royal courts and their splendour, social mores and taboos, hopes and aspirations, religious faith and ethical attitudes.

It is eminently clear from the Oriya *Bhagabata* that to its poet Krishna was only another name for Jagannatha, and Srikshetra, the seat of the lord of the universe, was the focal point of Orissa's social life and culture. It is the Jagannatha consciousness that fully permeates the Oriya *Bhagabata*. Indeed, it would not be wrong to say that Jagannatha is the real presiding deity or hero of this Oriya epic. In fact the religion of the *Bhagabata* is the religion of Jagannatha, unique for its cultural synthesis, universal bro-

therhood, assertion of the uniqueness of man in the entire creation and the equality of all before the Lord. This liberal spiritual culture which has been the mainstay of Oriya culture is also uniquely the culture of the *Bhagabata*, which presents living an enlightened life dedicating all one's efforts to the almighty as the true purpose of life. The poet also looked upon Buddha as another incarnation of Lord Jagannatha. In Orissa Krishna was also worshipped as Madhava and Gopinath. In Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata* these two names, Madhava and Gopinath, are also used frequently.

Though it has been mentioned earlier that the Oriya *Bhagabata* is not a literal or faithful translation of the Sanskrit original, yet it generally follows the main outlines of the original. Indeed it retains an overall fidelity to the mainstream of the original and there is no contradiction or contrariness between the two. The deviations are by way of compression and expansion, omission and addition, slight variations and modifications. It is difficult and certainly not possible within the limited objectives of this work to bring out all these points of difference and departure. Even if it is possible it is certainly not necessary except for academic purposes, and surely not for assessing the literary merit of the Oriya version. Suffice it to say that here is basically a translated epic which reads more as an original Oriya work from the points of view of language, theme and style than most really original works in ancient Oriya literature. And it has not only withstood the test of time as a classic but also shaped a society and its culture in a big way. Indeed it is a rare epic which makes poetry and public life integral to each other. Religion and metaphysics lose their esoteric and exotic connotations and become parts of what the Germans call *sittlichkeit* or social ethics.

The *Bhagabata* very briefly indicates the purpose of its composition in that initial prayer which Shaunaka and other sages put to Suta :

> Have mercy on us and tell us all those preferred knowledge knowing which Vishnu's *maya* will be lifted and the *jiva* will attain to salvation.

The *Bhagabata* is not an epic emphasising character delineation or development for its own sake. Most of the characters symbolise one value or another and in fact are neither elaborately sketched nor pursued for any great length of time. The story-lines are generally brief except in Gopaleela and Shree Krishnaleela, i.e. the Tenth volume. The delineation of the characters is however exquisite. In the poet's hand they acquire flesh and blood and almost emerge out of the socio-cultural landscape and speak to us in concrete earthy idiom and not through abstruse or abstract philosophy. Their uniqueness, speciality and inherent strength make them memorable and living. Leaving aside major characters let us take even a very minor character like Kamsa's washerman who is only barely mentioned in

the original Sanskrit work.

In Oriya version the poet gives him some space, and Krishna and Balarama's meeting with him in the streets of Mathura is really exquisite. To the enquiries of the two brothers he first turns a deaf ear, pretending unconcern and showing disdain. As he moves on majestically brushing off their query they accost him and then he comes out with his choicest abuses : "How dare you speak that way to the washerman of the king. You urchins who spend your time in useless pursuits like looking after cattle in the forest and playing on the flute. After all you belong to the lowliest of the low caste and how shamefaced of you to accost and question none other than the King's washerman".

The washerman's word, his gait, his puffed-up pride— everything is brought out so well in the space of only a few lines that he becomes a living creature.

The *Bhagabata* bristles with lines which are on the lips of the Oriya people. They have become an integral part of social usage. They have been handed down, often by word of mouth, from generation to generation and they contain seeds of profound truths or philosophical expressions which are very simply and directly expressed through unadorned idiom. These simple lines reverberate in one's mind with their poetic truth etched in realised experience. Indeed the *Bhagabata* is a veritable mine of such expressions and statements. It stirs up your soul, makes you think of its implications and tries to take you towards the very fundamentals of existence which is, after all, the highest purpose of literature. And that is not merely to inform or describe but to shake us up and enable us to realise our life and its contexts. This perhpas explains why the *Bhagabata* remains the most memorable, the most popular and the most outstanding of the Oriya classics.

A few samples of these simple, bare and evocative two-line aphorisms from different volumes of the epic, along with their English rendering, have been provided as Extract 1 in chapter 6.

The Sanskritic tradition divided religious epics broadly into two groups—the historical epics and the Puranas. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* belong to the former group while the Puranas are eighteen in number. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* even refers to the Puranas as the fifth Veda. The Puranas, no doubt, have undergone considerable change over time and surely many of them have nc retained their original shape. There have been attempts to define what is a Purana by its *lakshanas* or indicators. These were listed as five and later five other indicators were added raising it to ten.

In every regional literature we find the translation and transcreation of

the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagabata*. In Oriya there are only 5 proper Puranas even though we too have our eighteen. The Puranas of Mahadeva Das, Nilambara Das and others should not really be included as proper Puranas because of their small size. Further, if we go by the classification of Sanskrit classics, the Oriya *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are historical epics while *Harivamsa* and *Nrusimha Purana* are really sub-Puranas. Thus the real Purana in Oriya is the *Bhagabata* even though in common parlance we consider many other works as Puranas and count them as eighteen as in Sanskrit.

It is necessary to discuss briefly the importance of the new line-scheme called *navakshari brutta* (the nine-letter rhyme) which Jagannatha Das brought into use. Prior to this the *Dandi brutta*, based on irregular number of letters and words in the lines, was the ruling pattern; a pattern that had been used with unusual competence by Sarala Das. It had also found its following in numerous proverbs, riddles, folk poems etc. The number of letters and words in a line was in fact immaterial as it was after all meant primarily for oral recitation and much depended on how, and with what pauses and speed, the lines were recited rather than on the actual punctuation marks. This, however, rendered the lines, bereft of rhyming, difficult to remember and sing by the individual listener. Secondly, some also felt that a new form of rhyming had become necessary to give poetic lines internal rhythm and to induce proper development of moods or *rasas* as a new dimension. This seems to have been achieved by Jagannatha Das in his new *navakshari brutta* which enjoyed immense popularity by combining flexibility of recitation with the facility of easily remembering the rhymed lines and singing them in variable patterns and methods. Even though 5+4 was the normal break-up of the nine-letter line, it was capable of being broken up into various other permutations which also opened up immense possibilities of reciting the lines fitting them into the moods conveyed by the theme. By breaking up the traditional 5+4 letter-pauses into 2+3+4 or 3+3+3 etc. the lines could be read slower, more mellifluously if the occasion so demanded. In fact it may be said that in medieval poetry the rhythm and sound-patterning introduced by the *navakshari brutta* was a unique development.

In his works Jagannatha Das accepted and used *tatsam* words in ample measure. He also picked up the generally accepted and frequently used local *tadbhava* words and blended them marvellously with the *tatsam* words to forge a new poetic language. This language steered clear of the twin extremes of excessive Sanskritic word-use with their complex meanings and word-joinings and an over-dependence on the rugged local folk-idiom that had sometimes not gained wider currency. He thus created a

new poetic language which was balanced, elastic, effective and creative. Later poets took this ideal of blending *tatsam* and *tadbhava* words in right proportions as an objective of poetic craft. Upendra Bhanja said, "The poet's job was to please the mind with *divya* and *adivya* lines". These two words broadly refer to words derived from Sanskrit which was looked upon as the divine language, and the local prakrit. Abhimanyu Samantasimhar also said the same thing : *divya-adivya bhasare pada heba siddhi* (the lines will attain perfection in language both divine and non-divine). Any chapter in any volume of the Oriya *Bhagabata* bears ample testimony to the author's capacity for selective use of proper, optimum words; the ability to speak briefly and effectively through controlled narrative technique and a highly developed sensibility that constantly forged new metaphors and symbols. The lyricism of the *Bhagabata*, it is reasonable to assert, inspired and made possible the later *chhanda sahitya* in Oriya.

This great classic of Oriya literature was also conceived and composed as a sincere document to create and cultivate a genuine religious feeling among the people. Utkaliya Vaishavism was the specific religious philosophy but in Jagannatha's hand and through his mature poetic voice, this philosophy of a group acquired a universal dimension instead of remaining confined as a mere sectarian religious dogma or abstract philosophy. It was as if the Oriya public only waited for this great event. The religious teachings in the Oriya *Bhagabata* cut across all barriers of caste and creed. It speaks at a level where great poetry also conveys profound religious ideas. The religion of *Bhagabata* is *bhakti-dharma*, the religion of devotion. And what a magnificent example the Oriya *Bhagabata* remains of blending literary excellence with religious precepts! Later Dinakrushna Das's *Rasakallola*, Bhaktacharan's *Mathura Mangala* and Abhimanyu Samantasimhar's *Bidagdha Chintamoni* only followed this great model.

Basically the story of the *Bhagabata* is the story of Krishna and his exploits and excelleneces. Even though specifically the two parts of the 10th volume and the 11th volume are devoted to it, the theme recurs in one form or another in other volumes too. And the elaboration of the theme is achieved through a series of well-structured dialogues : between Shuka and Parikshita ; Narada and Basudev ; Abadhuta and Yaduraja ; Suta and Shaunaka; Kavi and Nimi. It is thus, in one sense, a religious document on Krishna. But it incorporates within its fold, in numerous interlocking episodes and in intricate manner, the essential teachings of the Upanishads, the Samhitas, the Brahmanas etc. The fourfold paths of salvation—*karma*, *gyana*, *bhakti* and *yoga*—celebrated in Indian religion and philosophy, no doubt find mention, but the distinctive emphasis is on *bhakti* blended with *yoga*. *Karma* and *gyana* surely take back seats. This

is the primary religious tone of the *Bhagabata* and it is expressed so beautifully and touchingly that even while speaking on behalf of a particular religious philosophy (Utkaliya Vaishnavism) it transcends all barriers and acquires universal appeal and significance.

This also perhaps explains why Jagannatha created a new language which was not just the local regional language, rugged and colloquial, and which almost fully rejected the Sanskrit vocabulary. He wanted to speak as much to the common man, the illiterate as also to the learned and the elite. This is a measure of his greatness and explains the difference in the use of language between him on one hand and Sarala Das and Balarama Das on the other.

The *Bhagabata* emphasised physical purity and a spirit of meditation as a precondition either for reading it or listening to it. At one level one could even call it the poetry of meditation. Appropriately recited it creates a mood of religious quietude and calm.

The many other minor works which are attributed to Jagannatha Das do not come near this level of excellence in combining the religion of *bhakti* with great poetic excellence. They are rather pale reflections of this great classic whose appeal remains universal and timeless.

Other Minor Works

The total literary output of Jagannatha Das has remained an unsettled issue and a matter of honest difference of opinion among the historians of Oriya literature. The author himself nowhere enumerates or even makes a mention of his total output. The four authors who have thrown some light on his life and times—his biographer Dibakara Das, Iswara Das, the author of *Chaitanya Bhagabata*, Rama Das of *Dardhyata Bhaktirasamruta* fame and *Anakara Samhita's* Nanda Das — are conspicuously silent about his works excepting the *Bhagabata*. Added to this there is also that familiar problem in ancient and medieval Oriya literary history when minor and insignificant authors sometimes claimed for their works the authorship of eminent writers either contemporaneous or immediately preceding them. For example, there is now a growing acceptance of a point of view that the two works earlier attributed to Balarama Das, namely, *Bata Abakasha* and *Bhava Samudra* are probably not really his. It appears extremely improbable that the author of such an epic as *Jagamohan Ramayana* or *Vedantasara* could have even authored such minor inanities. Literary historians have also now recognised many portions in *Surya Samhita*, *Gurubhakti Gita* and certain other works of Achyutananda Das as having been incorporated into the main texts at a later date and most likely composed by lesser talents. These opinions are based on valid arguments using internal literary and linguistic evidence. There is also genuine doubt based on similar literary evidence whether the 12th and 13th *skandhas* or volumes of the Oriya *Bhagabata* were really composed by Jagannatha Das. It appears more likely they were composed by other persons and not Jagannatha Das.

The two scholars and literary historians who attempted a complete enumeration of Jagannatha Das's writings were Jagabandhu Singh of *Prachina Utkala* fame and Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sadasiva Misra. Later scholars including Pandit Surya Narayan Das have largely depended on the listings done by these two.

There have been some literary historians who believe that Jagannatha Das had composed even his versions of Oriya *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Some years back an Oriya *Mahabharata* in 18 *parvas*, claiming authorship of Jagannatha Das, was published by one Bhikari Charan

Das of Cuttack. This is in *navakshari* rhyme (lines of 9 letters) like Oriya *Bhagabata* and thematically bears resemblance to Sarala Das's Oriya *Mahabharata* in ample measure. The language does not seem to belong either to the celebrated author of Oriya *Bhagabata* or even to 16th century. There is hardly any poetry in the lines and it would only be preposterous to accept it as the works of the great poet who composed Oriya *Bhagabata*.

As mentioned earlier the Oriya *Bhagabata* is a literary classic. It is one work that would earn immortality to any author. However, for purposes of literary history, it is necessary to put on record the other minor works of the same author even when such listing is not free from doubt. Such a complete listing has been made in the bibliography at the end of the book.

Taking into internal historical, literary and linguistic evidence most scholars and historians of literature have, however, accepted only the following works, in addition to the *Bhagabata*, as the works of Jagannatha Das. A brief-description of each of these works is given below :

1. *Artha Koili* : This appears to be a philosophical and spiritual version of Markanda Das's *Kesava Koili* and is broadly a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. It tries to explore the meaning and significance of life and death, and the relationship of the body and soul in simple, lyrical lines and in a language which is unadorned and rather bland despite their philosophical purpose. Some recent critical opinion has, however, expressed reservations about Jagannatha Das being its author.

2. *Gaja Stuti* or *Gaja Nistarana* : It is the poetic tale of the elephant's prayer to the Lord to save him from impending death occasioned by the attack of a crocodile. The charming, anguished lines are soaked in the spirit of surrender and supplication. This lyrical piece used to be taught in *Chatsalis* or primary schools in earlier years and is still very popular in Orissa.

3. *Darubrahma Gita* : This poetic piece enshrines the history and significance of Srikshetra Puri and that of the Lord Jagannatha as the deity hewn out of wood (Daru). It is only in three cantos and seems to have been composed keeping in view the needs of the lay public for religious teaching and discourse.

4. *Tula Bhina* :: When cotton is ginned again and again it gradually becomes softer and cleaner and is finally rendered suitable for being woven into threads. This important work seems to be an attempt through this technical metaphor to explain the philosophy and social practices related to the Orissan School of Vaishnavism of which Jagannatha Das was an important exponent. The attempt here is to expound these high metaphysical truths in simple, unadorned and easily intelligible language. This is an important document in the religious and literary history of

Orissa. The work has the speciality of being basically a poetic text with detailed meanings discussed in prose after specific stanzas. In the shape of a dialogue between Siva and Parvati the book delineates theories of creation, of the meaning of *brahman*, the soul and the physical body and also other metaphysical aspects of Vaishnavism. The explanatory prose pieces are exquisite in their simplicity, directness and clarity and are very near to poetry. It also marks an important milestone in the development of Oriya prose. There is, however, now signficant critical opinion which doubts whether this work belongs to Jagannatha Das.

5. *Duti Bodha* : Small in size, this lyrical piece delineates the Radha-Krishna theme in a simple lyrical style. There is also a brief mention of the author's initiation into Vaishnavism. The work was composed obviously after the author's meeting with Chaitanya.

6. *Mruguni Stuti* : Like *Gaja Stuti* this is also a prayer-song in which a female deer comes face to face with death with her frolicking child. The story of the hunter on the point of killing the innocent deer by surrounding her on all sides with fire and nets is a well-known story. But the author invests the poetic narration with an exceptional poignancy and lyrical grace that are indeed difficult to surpass.

7. *Gupta Bhagabata* : As in parts of the *Bhagabata* this work is also in the shape of a diologue between the sage Suka and king Parikshita. It is in 24 chapters and deals with the significance of *ekadasi* fasting, cosmology, the life story of Vyasa and Sukadev as also the significance of the name of Rama. It is a rather miscellaneous kind of work and does not have such literary relevance.

8. *Radhamanjari* : As a window on the Orissan school of Vaishnavism this is considered an important document . The relationship between Radha and Krishna has been delineated with all its metaphysical and spiritual implications.

9. *Sola Chaupadi* : This is also primarily a philosophical treatise in poetry and besides the Radha-Krishna theme it also discusses the role and status as also the spiritual significance of the *ashta nayikas*, the sixteen *sakhis* and the sixteen thousand Gopis who craved for union with Krishna. Srikshetra Puri is described as the eternal Braja, the birthplace and playground of Krishna where eternal *rasaleela* is being enacted with Sri Radha, the Gopis, the *ashta nayikas* etc.

10. *Manashiksha* : This is a philosophical treatise on the relationship between *jivatma* and *paramatma* as its mainstay. Krishna's childhood also finds an elaborate narration in it. Its aim seems to be to enable the average man to practise mental equanimity and through that attain to the *paramatma*.

11. *Dhruva Carita* : This is a lyrical composition based on the well-known puranic tale of Dhruva, the son of the demon-king Hiranyakashipu. He saw Hari everywhere and when challenged to say whether a pillar also contained Hari he asserted in the positive. His father then kicked at the pillar and then the Lord emerged out of it in the shape of a man-lion (Narasimha) and tore open the entrails of Hiranyakashipu. Scholars are now generally agreed that this composition was perhaps before the *Bhagabata* and it is also generally recognised as one of the earliest works of this poet. Jagannatha Das was no believer in the theory of art for art-sake, or poetry for poetry-sake. He did not believe in a hermetic tradition in which the writer belongs to a charmed circle and scarcely recognises the existence of an audience. For him, like religion or spiritualism, literature also had a value and a purpose — that of elevating man to a higher plane of existence and keeping men in society together through healthy and creative relationship. This utilitarian view-point and objective did not detract from the vast range and deep perception of life so characteristic of his works but surely they account for the rather functional approach of some of them like *Tula Bhina, Artha Koili* or *Manashiksha* and their preoccupation with metaphysical concepts and religious practices. To that extent their literary merit does seem to be somewhat less significant. On the other hand among his minor works *Dhruva Charita*, *Darubrahma Gita*, *Sola Chaupadi* or *Mruguni Stuti* contain passages of highly lyrical poetry that could have come only from the mature and accomplished poet who had composed the Oriya *Bhagabata*. Their charming lyrical style, musical qualities and simple idiom make them important works in contemporaneous literary development and enable us to have a wider view on the total output of Jagannatha Das, the maker of the unique classic, the *Bhagabata*.

Mahamahopadhyaya Sadasiva Misra also lists eight books to have been written by Jagannatha Das in Sanskrit. According to him they are 1) *Krushnabhakti Kalpalata*, 2) *Krushnabhakti Kalpalatafalam*, 3) *Nityaguptamala*, 4) *Upasana Sataka*, 5) *Prema Sudhambudhih*, 6) *Nityachara*, 7) *Sriradha Rasamanjari* and 8) *Niladri Satakam*. These are, however, not very significant literary works and in any case as works in Sanskrit language not very important. They seem to have been composed primarily for religous purposes. In *Sriradha Rasamanjari* the Sanskrit *slokas* are also accompanied by their Oriya renderings.

The well-known scholar Dr Bansidhar Mohanty has given reasonable proof of Jagannatha Das having composed two small books in Sanskrit named *Sudha Trayam* and *Nitya Gupta Chudamoni*.

As mentioned earlier Jagannatha Das's authorship of some of these

works in Oriya is increasingly being doubted with the passing years. For at least fifty years, for example, *Tula Bhina* and *Artha Koili* were considered to be fairly important minor works of Jagannatha Das. But recent critical opinion has expressed genuine doubts about their authorship. This is based not only on a larger and wider comparison of language and style of *Bhagabata* with these two works, but also on the discovery of other historical and literary evidences which point to other conclusions.

As regards the works in Sanskrit ascribed to him, these have never been taken very seriously by literary critics except the two mentioned by Dr Mohanty. Not only are the works mostly inconsequential in quality and theme; they are also small and flimsy in content and size. That a major poet like Jagannatha Das authored them is somewhat difficult to believe. It is possible that some minor poets in the period immediately following Jagannatha Das composed most of these Sanskrit texts as well as some of the Oriya texts which, however, came to be associated with Jagannatha Das because of their relevance to Utkaliya Vaishnavism, and also perhaps to give these the importance of his name.

Oriya Bhagabata and Its Impact on Oriya Literary Tradition

As mentioned earlier the Oriya *Bhagabata* is a major literary work of Oriya literature and marks the most important milestone after Sarala Das's *Mahabharata*. It gave a new elasticity to the language by a magnificent blending of Sanskrit and local idioms. It created a new diction and rhythm remarkable for its lyricism and as a major departure from Sarala's *dandi brutta*. It combined religious purpose with poetic excellence and created a new poetic idiom and poetic craft. No wonder many contemporary writers and writers in later generations were deeply influenced by his style and craft and many poetic creations came to be composed on the lines celebrated by him.

More immediately it was his *navakshari brutta* which inspired many contemporary and later authors. Mahadeva Das and Dwarika Das composed the 12th and 13th volumes or *skandhas* of *Bhagabata* in the same *chhanda*. Jasobanta Das's *Premabhukti Brahmagita*, Dibakar Das's *Jagannatha Charitamruta*, Rama Das's *Dardhyata-Bhaktirasamruta*, Bhupati Pandit's *Prema-Panchamruta*, Arakshita Das's *Mahimandala Gita*, and in this century Pandit Gopabandhu Das's *Gomahatmya* and Madhusudan's *Drustantamala* etc. are examples of the successful application of this *chhanda*.

Innumerable *kavyas*, poems, lyrics, plays including verse-plays have been composed based on themes taken from the Oriya *Bhagabata*. Many *samhitas*, *bhajans*, *janans* and *chaupadis* have also been composed in imitation of some of his minor works. It is not indeed possible to present a comprehensive list of all such works inspired or influenced by Jagannatha Das. In the following pages some of the more important authors and works where his influence is fairly distinctive and noticeable have only been discussed.

Balarama Das was an elder contemporary of Jagannath Das and the author of the classic *Jagamohan Ramayana* in Oriya. He was one of the Panchasakhas. In his *Uddhava Gita*, however, one can clearly notice influence of the ideas and language of the *Bhagabata*. In several episodes of the former work, such as Uddhava's description of the attributes and

qualities of Krishna and the activities of the Gopis in Gopapura, there are clear influence of *Bhagabata*'s corresponding lines and arrangement of themes. This is a clear pointer to the popularity of Jagannatha Das's composition even among is contemporaries.

Devadurlava Das's *Rahasyamanjari* is a poetic narration of Radha-Krishna theme and is considered an important Vaishnav *Kavya*. The pattern of the narration and more particularly the treatment of Krishna as identical with Lord Jagannatha show clear and unmistakable signs of the *Bhagabata*'s influence.

Ushavilasa by Shisu Shankara Das is an important *kavya* in Oriya literature and is justly celebrated. When Usha looks at the portraits of Pradyumna and Aniruddha, her feelings of emotive elation and secret desire are beautifully described. The description follows a similar episode in *Bhagabata* in its broad outline and frame.

Kartika Das's *Rukmini Bibha* takes the main thematic development of the *kavya* — Rukmini's marriage to Krishna and the connectd episodes of her sending a messenger to Krishna, her prayer to goddess Bhavani, Krishna's abduction of Rukmini, her brother Rukmana's humiliation in the hands of Krishna — from the *Bhagabata* in its essential outlines and its linguistic structure. Besides the above four poets (including his contemporary Balarama Das) mention may also be made of Bhupati Pandit's *Prema-Panchamruta* and Danai Das's *Gopibhasa* as works belonging to 17th and 18th centuries which show the influence of Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata*. The latter particularly is a highly evocative and well-crafted *kavya* with Radha-Krishna love-relationship as its theme. While it is true that Radha does not find even a mention in the *Bhagabata*, the language, the emotive pattern and the thematic growth of *Gopibhasa* borrows quite a bit from the former. In particular the character delineation of the Gopis is very much in line with the *Bhagabata*.

Bhupati Pandit was not merely another fine poet but also a follower of the Vaishnavism of Atibadi (Jagannatha Das) school. No wonder he was deeply influenced by the philosophy, literary style and life-attitudes of his mentor. In fact in *Prema-Panchamruta* he makes a mention of the work being conceived as an off-shoot of, and in line with, that classic. Like Jagannatha, Bhupati Pandit was also a believer in Advaita philosophy and *bhakti*. In *Bhagabata*, Jagannatha Das has assigned the name of Brundabati to the Gopi with whom Krishna had stealthily escaped during the *Rasaleela*. The description of this episode in the two works runs closely parallel.

Also in the 18th century four other major poets reveal considerable influence of the *Bhagabata* in their works. Dinakrushna Das's *Rasakal-*

lola, a major work of poetry, closely resembles in certain episodes, like Ugrasena trying to check the escape of Basudeva with Krishna from Kamsa's prison; the escapade of Krishna with Brundabati, a gopi, during the *rasaleela*, and Akrura carrying a message for King Nanda from Kamsa.

Abhimanyu Samantsinhar's *Bidagdha Chintamoni* is yet another major poetic work of the 18th century which shows in many lyrical passages the distinct inspiration of the *Bhagabata* both in language and in theme. Krishna playing his flute—an episode in the 22nd chapter of the 10th volume in *Bhagabata* —has a very close emotive and linguistic parallel in the 71st chapter of Abhimanyu's work.

Bhakta Charan Das was clearly a devoted admirer of Jagannatha Das and a follower of his poetic craft. Several episodes and passages in his *Mathura Mangala* closely follow the theme as narrated in *Bhagabata*. Kamsa's message to Nanda, the characterisation of Akrura, Krishna's *maya*, Krishna consoling the gopis, the wailing of Yashoda and the gopis, the unique vision of Akrura as he was taking his bath in the Yamuna, are some of the parallel themes developed on identical lines in the two works. The other important poetic work of the 18th century in which the *Bhagabata*'s influence is clearly discernible is *Shyama-Rasotsava* of Brajanath Badajena. Krishna's flute-play and the illusion and romance it creates in the hearts of the gopis is described in a manner and style closely resembling the passages in the *Bhagabata*. Some scholars have also found echoes of *Bhagabata* in Upendra Bhanja, another major poet of the 18th century but the language-use and style of the two authors are very different even when certain thematic treatments look parallel.

In the 19th century Kavisurya Baladeva Rath was influenced in his *jananas* (*Sarpajanana*, *Jagannatha janana* and *Mahabahujanana*) by the emotive contexts in Jagannatha Das's work. The blind tribal poet Bhima Bhoi's *Stuti Chintamoni*, a major poetic creation of the 19th century, shows the extent to which Bhima's anguished quest for divine light found a parallel expression in *Bhagabata*. Many of the lines in Bhima Bhoi's work are indeed lines taken from the *Bhagabata* and only slightly rearranged and modified. Even in the long poem *Mahajatra* of Radhanath Ray, generally acknowledged as the father of modern Oriya poetry, one can discern the influence of Jagannatha Das's *Bhagabata*. Pandit Gopabandhu Das's *Gomahatmya* also shows in certain essentials the influence of the great epic.

Besides these, many modern poets have gone back to the *Bhagabata* for certain philosophic and symbolic contexts to express a new mood and new awareness of modernity. Sometimes they have discovered parallels in puranic times and mythical themes of the *Bhagabata* certain archetypes

which describe man's destiny and the human situation today in symbolic terms. In short they have found a contemporary relevance in these events and ideas. It is perhaps because of the agonised and open-ended quest for meaning and relevance which has endeared the *Bhagabata* to modern poets, who find parallels to it in their own experience. To that extent the relevance of the *Bhagabata* seems to be ever on increase. In fact the three major poets who have influenced the tone of modern Oriya poetry of last forty years to a great extent are Jagannatha Das, Sarala Das and Bhima Bhoi, perhaps in that order.

Selections from Poetry

The *Oriya Bhagabata* is not merely the *magnum opus* of Jagannatha Das as a poet; it is one of the finest classics in *Oriya* language. It remains unsurpassed for its combination of philosophical ideas and charming lyricism. It is not easy to translate it into English. A few selections from this work are presented here in translation along with the originals in the facing page.

The translations have been done by the present writer.

ORIGINAL
Aphorisms
(a few selected couplets)

1

Martya mandalé déha bahi
Devatā hoilé marayee.

Sakala déhé Nārāyāṇa
Basanti ānaḍi kāraṇa.

Agni jésane sarva khāi
Bicharé Bhala manda nahin

Sakala déhé Narahari
Basanti atmārupa dhari.

Dhana arjané dharma kari
Dharmé prapata Narahari.

Amruta vinaya vachana
Kahi toshiba prānimana.

Durlava nara kalévara
Kevala mukati duāra.

TRANSLATION

1

Born on this earth
even the Gods die.

In every thing embodied Narayana resides
as the cause without beginning.

The fire consumes everything
unconcerned with the good and the bad.

In all embodied beings
Narahari inheres as the *atman*.

Wealth acquired is for religious deeds
and through that you attain to the lord.

With humble words like nectar
you should please men's minds.

This human body is a rare gift
meant only to aspire for salvation.

Bahuta sanga jahin mili
Abasya upujai kali.

Aharé bhalamanda nahin
Jé sthané jémanta milai.

Atmā kusalé sarbasiddhi
Tarai samsāra baridhi.

Durgama patha yé bhajana
Bhayé bhājilé jogijana.

Dukhé sanchita jété dhana
Sé nuhé sukhé prayojana.

Karma kasana déha sahé
Aranyé ajagara prayé.

Karma tohara nija Guru
Uddhava kété tu pachāru.

Jāhāku rakhibé ananta
Ki karipāre balabanta.

Manushya déhé divyagyān
Dékhi santosha Bhagabāna.

Apanā hasté jihwā chhedi
Ké tāra achhi prativāḍi.

Manati sukha dukha dātā
Se pāpa punyara karatā.

Wherever a crowd gathers
there is bound to be a quarrel.

In food there should be no choosiness
whatever, wherever is available.

With the soul's well-being everything is achieved
and you cross the ocean of *samsar.*

The path of meditation is indeed tough
even the yogis panic away in fear.

The savings acquired through pain
are of no avail for happiness.

The body suffers the pangs of *karma*
like the python in the forest.

Karma is your own guru
what else do you enquire O Uddhava ?

What can the powerful do to one
whom the Lord protects.

Seeing the divine awareness in man
even the God is pleased.

If you cut off your own tongue
who is there to protest ?

The mind is the giver of pleasure and pain
the author of sin and guilt.

Dandibā shakti jāra thāi
Sé puni kshamā ācharai.

Sarparé jāta kalu moté
Svabhāva chhādibi kémanté.

Sakala tirtha to charaṇé
Badrikā jibi ki kāraṇe.

Jibara bhala manda bāṇi
Marana kalé tāhā jāṇi.

Suta tanaya dārā dāsa
É sarva bijuli prakāsa.

Manchāru padi māmu malā
Moté ṭa daiba rakhilā.

Iswara nitya niranjana
Nirguna satya sanātana.

Triguna sanga jara nāhin
Uddhava Iswarati séhi.

É suṭa darā bandhu sanga
Jésané samudra ṭaranga.

Akāsh jéhné sarva sunya
Sérupé hoi udāsina.

Niskāma janmc jā sariré
Atmāku apané uddharé.

He who has the power to punish
also sometimes forgives.

You gave me birth as a snake
say, how I give up my nature ?

All the places of pilgrimage are at your feet
why then should I go to Badrika ?

The good and bad of a Being
you know only at the time of death.

Sons and off-springs, wives and servants
they are only flashes of lightning.

Maternal uncle fell to his death from the machan
and god kept me alive.

God is the eternal, the one without blemish.
He is above attributes, the true and the eternal.

The one who has no association with the three *gunas*
Uddhava he is verily the God.

The son, the wife, friends, relations
they are as waves of the sea.

The sky totally vacant
be detached like it.

In whom desirelessness is born
he saves his own soul.

Dhana kārpenya sévā phalé
Kibā asādhya mahitalé.

2

Tapana jāra chakshu béni
Udaya ashta pakshma béni.

Samsāra jāhāra katāksha
Yé jiva labhé jā pratyaksha.

Udadhi jāhara udara
Asthi samuha mahidhara.

Shirā samuha nadigana
Bruksha ousadhi ṭanuroma.

Jimuṭa gana jāra kesha
Sandhyā jāhāra pija bāsa.

Prakruti hrudaya jāhāra
Jāhāra mana nishākara.

Pakshiyé jāra vyākarana
Buddhi visaya manugana.

Jāra nivas nara déha
Jahin kalpita mayā moha.

Volume II Chapter 1)

With wealth, thrift and service
What is unattainable in this world ?

2

The sun is his two eyes
its rising and setting
enacted by the two eyelashes.

His wink is this *samsara*
and the *jiva* receives it directly.

The oceans are his bowels
and his bones, the mountains.

The rivers are his veins
and trees and shrubs
hairs on his body.

The clouds are his hair
the evening his true clothes.

Prakriti is his heart
and his mind, the moon.

The birds are his grammar
the *manus* his intelligence.

His nest is the human body
woven out of illusory *maya*.

3

Ayusha kshaya na jaṇanti
Visaya bhava mané chinti.

Nishā harai ardha bela
Nidrā bā bandhu sangaméla.

Dibasa artha chintākula
Kutumba posané bikala.

Suta Kalatra déha pāyi
Anandé tānka madhyé thāi.

Vishnura māyā satya chinti
Nikaté mrutyu na dékhanti.

(Volume II Chapter 1)

4

Sé prabhu kālara mahimā
Ké kahiparé guna simā.

Priya, apriya jāra nāhin
Binasha karé sarba déhi.

Jé kālapurushara bhayé
Niraté pabanati bahé.

Jé kala bhayé surya tapé
Brahmānda madhyagaté byapé.

3

Ever engrossed in material pursuits
they don't notice the erosion of life.

Night takes away half of it
or sleep, woman or company of friends.

The day devoted to anguished quest
for wealth to maintain the family.

Happy in the charmed circle
of sons, grandsons and relations.

They take Vishnu's *maya* as reality
and never notice Death sitting nearby.

4

He is the Lord, the Time;
Whoever can enumerate his attributes ?

He has no favourites, no foes,
He destroys all the embodied beings.

Afraid of that *Kalapurusha*
the wind ever blows.

Driven by the same fear
the sun roams the skies alone.

Jahara bhayé meghagaṇa
Brusti karanti anukshana.

Jāhara bhayé Tārāgaṇa
Udaya huanti gagana.

Jāhāra bhayé brukshyagàṇa
Latā ousadhi sashyamāna,

Jathākālaré puspa phala
Phalanti, phutanti nirmala.

Jāhāra bhayé nadigaṇa
Srabu achhanti anukshaṇa.

Udadhi jāhāra bhayaré
Adyāpi kébé na uchhulé.

Agni jāhāra bhayé puṇa
Samasta karai dahana.

Jāhāra bhayé giribara
Bhumiré hoichhi nischala.

(Volume III Chapter 29)

5

Dekhai swapna nānā barna
Marana hetunakara chinha.

Suvarna kanthé déha chhai
Dékhai munda tāra nāhin.

Darpané ādityara jyoti
Ratré dékhai bhojapati.

The clouds send down rains
without punctuation;
the stars shine in the sky
the trees, plants and creepers
flower and fruit in time.

The rivers flow ceaselessly
the oceans never jump the banks.

Fire consumes everything
and the mountains stand
rooted to the earth.

5

And in his sleep he saw
many symbols
all of them signs of death.

He saw his body's shadow
cast on a golden wall
and the shadow had no head.

He saw the sun
shining forth at night
from a mirror.

Dipé dusanti dui dui
Chandrahin témanta disai.

Chhayara déhé chhidramaya
Niswasa bajé sankha praya.

Suvarna pratimayé brukshé
Kamsaku disai pratyakshé.

Gardabha kandhé chadhijanté
Bisa bhakshyai louha patré.

Taila ghasiṇa digambara
Hrudaré jabapushpa māla.

Dakshina digé jaé dhain
Chula bandhana siré nahin.

(Volume X Chapter 45)

6

The Six Gurus : Wind, Sky, Water, Fire, Moon and Sun

Dekha pabana é sharire
Bahai antara bāharé.
Sarbatra bahai samsaré
Adéha sarbagandha haré.

É rupé sarva déhé thāi
Uḍāsi jana prayé hoi.
Saine basai sarva déhé
Kāhāri sangé sanga nohe.

The lamps looked double
the moon looked double
the shadow was riddled all over.

And his breath sounded as the conch shell
verily he saw golden images
perched on trees.

And he was riding an ass
savouring poison from an iron pan
his body stark naked was soaked in oil
and coloured flowers adorned his chest.
He saw himself
running south
his hair all dishavelled.

6

See this wind that blows
within and without,
disembodied, it blows everywhere
staling away all smell.

Everywhere, in all bodies
and yet nowhere
uninvolved, equally for all
and yet belonging to none.

Mu éhā pabanu bichāri
Shikhili guru shikshā kari.
Eṇu pabana prayé hoi
Sangaté thai na misai.

**

Akasha prayé sarve thāre
Byāpichhi atmā nirvikāré.
Déharé thāi sanga nohé
Ghata akāsha praya rahé.

Megha jésané sunyé thāi
Shariré akāsha dhānkai.
Bhumi lokanku chhāya dishé
Sé jéhné akāshé na mishé
Tésané atmā déha guṇé
Na misé éhā chinu mané.

Mu jé akāsha guru kari
Abani madhyé déha dhari.
Anandé bhramai samsāré
Sparasha na kari kahare.

**

Jala jésané sunirmala
Swabhāvé snigdha sumadhura.

Madhura suruchi bachané
Harasa kari sarvajané.

Tirthara prayé bhava bané
Bhramai jana paritrāṇé.

This I learnt from the wind
and so took him on as guru
and like the wind
I am near and yet near mingle.

**

The soul, like the sky
extends everywhere
without bonds;
dwells within the body
and yet remains fully detached
like the sky reflected
in a jar of water.

The clouds floating in void
cover the sky with their bodies,
people on the ground see the shade
and yet they never merge in the sky.

Likewise the Soul
it never partakes of the body.
Considering this
I took on the sky as my guru.
And carrying this body
I roam the wide world
without attachment, happily.

**

The water, clear as crystal
by nature soft and sweet
with its babbling, sweet, tasteful
it pleases everyone.

As holy places it roams
in this jungle of the world
conveying salvation to men.

Tirtha sparasé lokabrunḍa
Jésané lavanti ananḍa.

Snāhāna darshana kirtané
Pavitra honti prānimāné.

É anubhavé more shikshā
Jalu shikhili guru dikshā.

**

Tapé mohara kalevara
Sudipta téja baliyāra.

Kebala patra mo udara
Eṇu mu loké bhayankara.

Téṇu mu dhyāna yoga balé
Bhojana karé sarva tharé.

Agni jésané sarva khāi
Bicharé guna dosha nahin.

Kébé prakashé aprakāshé
Bhojana karé sarva basé.

Sreya ichhantā dātānkara
Papa nāsai purvāpara.

Apaṇā māyāré srujan
Jé sata asata lakshaṇa.

Tahin prakesha hoi tāra
Swarupa prakashé Iswara.

Touching the holy places
the crowd derives happiness
and as they bathe, sing and recite
its glory, they are purified.

This experience, my education
this I have learnt
from water as my guru.

**

Through meditation, my body
powerful with glowing *tejas*
and my womb only a container;
hence among men
I am fearsome.

Through yoga and meditation
I eat everywhere
as the fire eats everything
does not discriminate
between virtue and guilt.
Sometimes manifest
sometimes unmanifest
it too eats in every dwelling.

Those who offer
wishing *punya*
it destroys their sins
past and present;
creating, through its own *maya*
signs of existence, absence,
own self as Iswara.

Agni jemanta kastha pai
Temanté rupa prakāshai.

Éṇu agniku guru kari
Bhramai loké déha dhari.

**

Janma joubana jarā mrutyu
Shubha asubha dukha hétu.

É sarva guna bahé deha
Jivara nuhé parigraha.

Chandrara kshaya bruddhi jéhné
Krushna shukala pakshamané.

Loka lochané bhrānti dishé
Akshaya éka kalā shésé.

Jivara émanta bébhāra
Swabhabé ajara amara.

É anubhavé Chandra Chāhin
Bhramai Guru shikshā pai.

**

Indriya gana é shariré
Bhramai visaya gocharé.

Jejhā bisaya anudiné
Bhoga karanti nija .hané.

As is the wood
so is the shape that fire assumes
and so taking on fire as my guru
I roam the world embodied.

**

Birth, youth, old age, death
the causations of the auspicious
the inauspicious, the pain
all these are attributes of the body
and the *jiva* cannot escape these.

Like the moon
waxing and waning
in bright and dark fortnights;
to the eyes of men this illusion
at the end only one *kala*
that remains undestroyed;
likewise the *jiva*
by nature beyond old age
beyond death.

Looking at the moon
this experience;
and I go along
learning this from that guru.

**

The senses in this body
they keep on looking
for their objects;
day after day, each enjoys
its object, staying in its place.

Atmara sanga nahin téṇé
Aditya jésané kirané.

Sakala Sthānu rasa haré
Nirlépa nirdosa bicharé
Kalaré samasta tejai
Sanchita dané kshobha nahin
É jiva-atmā sarva déhé
Indriya rasé basa nohé.

Jemanté rabi bimba niré
Temanta sthula buddhi naré.

Atmara bhéda buddhi karé
Upādhi gunara bikaré.

É anumāné mo bichara
Éṇu mo guru divākara.

(Volume XI Chapter 8)

7

Jesané kita urnanābhi
Nija badanu sutra bhābi

Jala nirmāi ratra mukhé
Madhyé biharé atma sukhé.

Ékanté rātré kridā karé
Surya udayé ṭā samharé.

E rupé srusti leelā kari
Samsaré khelé Narahari.

(Volume XI Chapter 10)

The soul
it has no association there
like the sun and its rays.

The rays pick up *rasas*
from every place
unattached, blemishless
and when the time comes
give up everything;
no regrets in gifting away
all the savings.

The *jivatma*, in all bodies,
it is never servile
to the savourings of the senses.
As the sun's image in water
People with gross intelligence
discriminate the *atman*
by its attributes, its titles.

Considering these matters
I took on the sun
as my guru.

7

Just as the spider
weaves a net early in the night
with threads taken out of its mouth,
plays within
in great pleasure all alone,
and with the rising of the sun
destroys it,
likewise the Lord, he plays in this world
with his own creations.

8

Dékha É jété naḍa nadi
Prabāhé milanti jaladhi.

Labaṇa jalé sé misanti
Swanāma guṇe pasoranti.

Gopa kamini éhimaté
Mana jibana déi moté.

Déha samsāra pasorilé
Janma maraṇu nistarilé.

(Volume XI Chapter 13)

8

See all the these rivers, rivulets
they flow on and join the sea.
Mingling with saline water
they forget their name and identity.
Likewise the cowherd maidens
have merged their life and mind in me.
They forget the body, the *samsar*
and were delivered over
from birth and death.

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The present monograph has got a new dimension as the ancient master and his works have been explored by one who is himself an eminent poet of the modern times. Dr Sitakant Mahapatra's appreciation of Jagannatha Das would surely remain a classic example of epic revisited in the light of modern temperament and outlook.

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Inset : A photograph of the marble statue of Jagannatha Das erected at Satalahadi Math, Puri.
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